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# Articles in Today's Clips

**Wednesday, November 12, 2008**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

**Note:** Due to Michigan's Poverty Summit there will be no daily news clips on Thursday, Nov. 13 or Friday, Nov. 14.

On Nov. 13, read updates from the Poverty Summit  
at the news blog at [www.michigan.gov/poverty](http://www.michigan.gov/poverty)  
and watch video at [www.youtube.com/DHSPovertySummit](http://www.youtube.com/DHSPovertySummit)

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November 11, 2008

## Abandoned 8-year-old returned to Indiana

*By Francesca Jarosz*  
*francesca.jarosz@indystar.com*

An 8-year-old Wabash County boy abandoned in Nebraska last week has been returned to Indiana and is in the custody of the Department of Child Services.

The boy was sent back to Indiana on Friday, after an Indiana court ordered he be placed in DCS custody, said Jeanne Atkinson, a spokeswoman for Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services.

The boy's mother left him at a hospital in Omaha on Thursday. Neither his name nor his mother's are being released by either state agency.

The Indiana boy is among 30 children who have been abandoned in Nebraska since the state's safe-haven law took effect in July, according to the Department of Health and Human Services Web site. The law prohibits prosecution for leaving a child at a hospital; it was meant to protect children in immediate danger.

It has led to parents dropping off children as old as 17 because it does not define a "child" by age.

Four out-of-state children have been abandoned in Nebraska under the law. The Wabash County boy is the first from Indiana, Atkinson said.

Susan Tielking, a spokeswoman for Indiana's DCS, said that in all abandonment cases, the department first ensures that all measures are taken to protect the child's well-being.

Indiana's safe-haven law, enacted in 2000, allows parents to drop off infants younger than 45 days at sites such as hospitals, police stations and firehouses.

Nebraska lawmakers will convene a special session Friday to add a 3-day age limit to the state's law.

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Robert Blodgett stands in front of his family at their home in El Cajon, Calif., Thursday, Nov. 5, 2008. Seen in the background is his wife Celeste Blodgett, top right, and their four sons, from left to right, Garrett, 12, Zachary, 14, Matthew, 9, and Mark, 7. Robert Blodgett feels that Nebraska's safe haven law is appalling and says abandoning teens is simply not an option. (AP Photo/Denis Poroy)



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Nebraska Law Leaves Children in Limbo  
Wall Street Journal - 8 hours ago

[Full coverage »](#)

## Parents of teens watch Nebraska safe haven law

By LEANNE ITALIE – 14 hours ago

NEW YORK (AP) — Yes, you have to clean your room. No, you can't go to the party. Yes, you have to ride the school bus. GET UP!

Patricia Lorenz knows how hard it can be raising teens, and she knows it four times over.

"They fray the apron strings by being obnoxious little twerps," said Lorenz, whose brood is now grown, out of the house and doing great. "But that's their job. I don't ever remember wishing I could drop them off somewhere."

In Nebraska, that's exactly what's happening under a safe haven law that has stressed-out parents abandoning children as old as 17 without fear of prosecution. While the intent of such laws is to allow desperate mothers safe options for unwanted newborns, safe haven in Nebraska has gone awfully wrong, or is it terribly right?

Raising teen-agers — still kids in some ways, but old enough and big enough to think themselves full-in-control adults — can be a frustrating experience far different from any other, parents say. And unlike the baby years, where there are new parents' gatherings, and relatives eager to come over and help out, the teen parenting years can feel isolating and scary.

Some experts say the parents of teens who have turned their kids over to the state probably made a tough choice.

"In some ways what they're doing is an incredibly noble thing to do," said Betty Londergan, author of the new book "The Agony and the Agony: Raising a Teenager Without Losing Your Mind."

"You can get so sideways with your kids and to actually reach out for help is an incredibly valiant thing to do, as opposed to hitting them, or worse," she said.

Londergan, with a 17-year-old daughter from a previous marriage, and her husband, Larry Schall, moved to Atlanta from Swarthmore, Pa., three years ago. That made it difficult for Schall to spend regular quality time with his three kids from his first marriage. His son, then in ninth grade, grew increasingly defiant and difficult to control.

After the teen disappeared for nearly two weeks, and faced other problems, the family spent thousands of dollars and months in agony for the teen to live for two months in a therapeutic wilderness program, followed by an alternative boarding school earlier this year. Schall says his child, now 17, is in a far better place.

"I know I am in a very small group of parents that could even consider doing this kind of intervention," Schall said. "And now (the teen's) college savings are gone. I would do the same today as I did a year ago. The experience has been transformative for all of us."

Those parents and others around the country have been closely following the saga in Nebraska. The state, the last in the nation to enact a safe haven law, didn't specify an age limit for child abandonments, making it the broadest measure on record and opening the floodgates for children as old as 17.

Since the law went into effect in July, 30 children have been dropped off at state-licensed hospitals. Many are teens and nearly all are older than 10, with some from as far away as Georgia, Michigan and Iowa.

Several parents or guardians to leave children in Nebraska reported out-of-control behavior. The parent of at least one said she was trying to "scare" her son. Unemployed widower Gary Staton had, simply, reached the end.

He left nine of his 10 children, ranging from a year old to 17, at an Omaha hospital in September. Staton told Omaha's KETV: "I didn't think I could do it alone. I fell apart."

"Those people are saying, 'I've done the best I can and I can't do it anymore,'" said Dr. Jason Stein, a family therapist in Los Angeles. "That is a very telling piece of the story. It



goes to the humility of being a parent. It's easy to judge and chastise these people, but they're actually making a very proactive decision, albeit not necessarily the best one."

Londergan and Schall, both 54, along with other parents of adolescents, empathize with the relentless pressure and frustration that come with the territory. The stress, they said, can be an isolating experience unique to the age.

Lorenz, 63, remembers it well. She divorced her husband after three kids and seven years of a troubled marriage. She remarried and had a fourth child, only to divorce again. Never earning more than \$28,000 a year, she struggled alone, living in Wisconsin far from relatives.

Now enjoying life on the flip side in Largo, Fla., Lorenz said she had kids in college every year for 17 years while making it as a writer, supporting her family working on radio commercials and renting out bedrooms to airline pilots passing through.

"It wasn't easy and it hurt twice as much when one of the kids rolled their eyes at me in disgust," she said. "Yes, you have to ride the bus to school. You can't go to your friend's house until your room is clean and your piano is practiced. You promised Mrs. So-and-so that you'd baby-sit, so, no, you can't go to the party."

While sympathy runs high for a parent dealing with a colicky infant, a towering teen screaming at a parent in a public place is more apt to bring on annoying glares over soothing condolences from onlookers.

"Parents are almost always blamed," said Dr. Norman Hoffman, a family therapist in Ormond Beach, Fla., and author of the book "Bad Children Can Happen to Good Parents."

"It's like, 'What did I do wrong?' But there's hope in every city and every state. It's just a matter of understanding the ways in which to work with the system. You have to fight, you have to scream and shout for services."

Stressed-out parents with meager finances, little education or language barriers may have trouble navigating often complicated procedures and paperwork to seek help, either through government agencies or private organizations, Hoffman said. And shame may hold some of them back, allowing defiant, drug-using or otherwise troubled young people to spin out of control.

Yet Hoffman considers the notion of abandoning an older child under safe haven "barbaric" and "primitive" when free or low-cost treatment and intervention is available. Parents in a variety of life circumstances agreed.

Doris Montano, 40, is a single parent working three jobs to support herself and her 15-year-old daughter in Baldwin, N.Y. Her divorce after 13 years of marriage was finalized two years ago and was rough on her child.

"I get a lot of mouth. A lot of temper tantrums when she doesn't get her way," Montano said. "It's designer everything, the trends. She's a little prima donna. But no matter how angry she makes me I can't see life without her. She and I were meant to be together."

At 43, Robert Blodgett owns his own marketing and public relations firm in the San Diego, Calif., area. He calls himself a "father in the trenches" with a 14-year-old son and three younger boys.

"Sure, there are times where I'm just completely exasperated on how to communicate with my son," he said. "Sometimes I wonder, 'Who's home?' His room's always a mess. He forgets things constantly. Many times he's flat out lazy and can never, ever wake up on his own. It drives me bonkers. But I can't ever imagine a situation wherein my stress level would get that bad."

It's up to the Nebraska Legislature to decide how to deal with the state's safe haven controversy during a special session the governor scheduled for Nov. 14. Speaker of the Legislature Mike Flood said he'll introduce a bill setting a 3-day-old age limit for child abandonments.

Lorenz, Londergan, Blodgett and other parents hope the loophole that led to the dumping of older kids is closed.

"It's a tightrope that we walk for 18 years," Lorenz said. "Click your heels and say hallelujah because your struggles are going to make your children more capable and more interesting."

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Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2008

## Nebraska's Abandoned Kid Law

By Claire Suddath

On July 18, 2008, Nebraska became the last state to institute a "safe haven law," decriminalizing the act of abandoning an infant at a state hospital. Only five lines long, the law had one glaring omission—the government never defined an age limit. Since July, 30 children, most of them teens or preteens, have been abandoned at Nebraska hospitals. Four children were even driven from other states and left by their parents. Oddly enough, the law has had no effect on those it attempted to protect: no infants have been abandoned yet.

The Nebraska state legislature will convene in a special emergency session on Nov. 14 to revise the safe haven law; they are expected to limit the age to babies under three days old. TIME talks to Todd Landry, director of child and family services for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services about the law and its unintended consequences.

### **Why did the Nebraska state legislature neglect to define the word "child?"**

They didn't neglect it, they just never decided on it. Safe haven laws were instituted in the 1990s to deal with the problem of parents who were abandoning their babies and leaving them essentially for dead in dumpsters, alleyways, or restrooms. The laws were really designed as a mechanism for these overwhelmed new parents to get their kids to a safe place right after they were born. They were always designed for newborns and infants.

Our legislators, though, were uncomfortable trying to pick a specific age, so they decided to leave the term "child" undefined. Unfortunately that had the unintended consequence of preteens and teenagers being left.

### **What happens to the kids when they're left at the hospital?**

One thing to keep in mind is that this law solely protects the person who leaves the child from criminal prosecution and only for the act of leaving the child at the hospital. It does not mean that they no longer are involved in the process. That's a misconception that's sometimes out there. Parents and guardians still will be involved in the juvenile court process for the kids that come into our system.

### **Really? Because I pictured a mom driving up to a hospital dropping off her kid and saying, "That's it, I'm done."**

No, nothing could be further from the truth. They may be ordered to provide services, ordered to participate in

family therapy, and they may be ordered to pay child support. Parental rights are not terminated or ended when they leave the child at the hospital.

**So what happens from the child's point of view?**

When the child is left at the hospital law enforcement is immediately notified. They will go to the hospital, they will place the child in 48-hour custody, and then they transfer the child to the Dept. of Health and Human Services. Then we look [to place them in] a relative's home first because it's someone that they already have a relationship with. If not, we go with a foster home. Most of the kids are in foster homes. Then it's a regular court process in juvenile court. The parents no longer have sole determination about what's going to happen to the child. They will be involved but now the judge will ultimately decide what happens to these kids.

**What is the emotional difference between dropping of a baby and dropping off an older child?**

When a newborn or infant is abandoned in a hospital, there's a good chance that it isn't going to remember the experience. There's not going to be any significant consequences over the life of that child. However, when a teenager or a preteen is left at a hospital and abandoned in that way, they understand exactly what is going on. There is an extra level of trauma that is endured.

**On Nov. 14, the Nebraska legislature is meeting to change the safe haven law so that it only applies to babies younger than 3 days old. How soon will that change occur?**

As soon as the governor signs the bill it will immediately become law and go into effect. The soonest it will happen will be November 21, one week after the session convenes. At that point, if a person leaves a child who is outside the age limit, then that person can be criminally prosecuted for the abandonment of that child.

**What can you recommend to parents struggling with their children?**

Get the help that you need. Reach out to your family your friends your faith community. If you don't know where to turn, call [211](#), or the [Boys Town National Hotline](#). Then go the next step. Follow up. Don't quit. Continue to work with your kid with counseling and therapy. Maybe it's your own parenting skills that need help. But continue to reach out to get the help that you need. That's what's healthy. That's what our children need and that's what we certainly want people to be doing.

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# Mother gets prison for killing infant daughter

Posted by Lynn Turner | Kalamazoo Gazette November 11, 2008 11:20AM

**KALAMAZOO** -- Amber McIntyre-Roden wept as she stood before a judge Monday for killing her infant daughter.

"I'm sorry. I know what I did was wrong. There's no way I can take it back," she said.

"I think of Tamiah every minute of every single day, along with my two other girls," the 23-year-old Kalamazoo resident said, her voice cracking.

But as Kalamazoo County Circuit Judge Gary C. Giguere Jr. began speaking, McIntyre-Roden's tears dried. She shook her head and appeared angry.

"The victim died as the result of violent shaking," Giguere said, before sentencing McIntyre-Roden to 18 to 50 years in prison. "It's one of the worst things that could happen -- for a mother to kill her child."

Investigators said that on July 18 McIntyre-Roden took 2-month-old Tamiah to Bronson Methodist Hospital, where hospital personnel reported the infant was suffering from effects of child abuse. The baby died July 26 from what an autopsy showed was blunt-force trauma to the head.

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McIntyre-Roden was initially charged with child abuse, but those charges were amended to first-degree murder. She pleaded guilty last month to second-degree murder.

Court records show McIntyre-Roden was previously convicted of domestic violence, prostitution and cocaine charges. She failed previous probationary periods and failed the Drug Treatment Court program, according to Giguere.

"You were this child's biological mother, but you never acted that way ... and (you) are responsible for her death," the judge told McIntyre-Roden. He said her two other children are fortunate now that their mother won't be able to harm them.

McIntyre-Roden shook her head and whispered to her attorney several times. "I feel you don't recognize I've been clean (of drugs) a year," she said.

"You killed a ... baby," Giguere responded. "Go with the sheriff now."

Contact Lynn Turner at [lturner@kalamazoo Gazette.com](mailto:lturner@kalamazoo Gazette.com) or 388-8564.

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# LIVINGSTON DAILY.COM

November 11, 2008

## Agencies unite in fight to meet growing needs

*By Kristofer Karol*  
*DAILY PRESS & ARGUS*

The 107,000 meals given to needy Livingston County residents by Gleaners Community Food Bank in October 2008 represents nearly double the demand of October 2007.

As the economy continues to sputter, Gleaners and Livingston County's other human service agencies are pressed to meet the increasing demand for help.

Mike McDonald of Gleaners said it's imperative that local human service agencies continue working together to be more efficient and to leverage more money from donations.

"Can we all survive by ourselves?" McDonald said. "I don't think so."

Representatives from eight human service agencies, as well as the Livingston County United Way, met at the latter's Genoa Township offices Monday afternoon to discuss efforts being made to better utilize assistance programs in the wake of an ever-growing need. The talk came during Michigan Homeless Awareness Week.

In September, the Livingston County Department of Human Services reported almost 8,000 cases, up 34 percent from two years prior. Meanwhile, the county unemployment rate in September was 6.2 percent, compared to 8.7 percent statewide. There are 9,400 county residents, or roughly 5 percent of the population, living in poverty.

"Families struggle in this county more than people understand," said Jeanette Freeland, an administrative analyst with the Livingston County Department of Human Services. "That's why we're committed to this drive to help them better."

Together, the coalition has helped leverage \$50,000 in local United Way donor dollars last year into \$113,000 additional dollars, for a total of \$163,000. For example, the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency was able to acquire an additional \$73,000 in rent subsidies from the state after working with the collaborative body of local agencies to help come up with dollars for a case manager.

In addition, the collaborative body has helped streamline the approval process for program participants by consolidating applications.

Even with an increased need in programs, some agency directors said many people either don't utilize them because of pride or because they are unaware of the services.

Some of the programs highlighted during Monday's meeting include a partnership with First National Bank to help those with low income or medical ailments in paying for vehicle repairs; financial education classes available through a handful of groups including Community Mentoring Services; and a Community Connect event featuring many local human service agencies, businesses and volunteers set for 9 am to 3 p.m. Jan. 31 at the Parish Life Center at St. Patrick Church in Brighton.

For more on those programs, or additional programs, contact the services hotline at 211.

As the need continues to grow, some agency directors said it would be imperative to get more volunteers. Meanwhile, Nancy Rosso, executive director of the Livingston County United Way, said the team of human service agencies will continue to encourage residents needing help to seek it.

"We don't want to keep it a secret," Rosso said. "We want people to plug in and use it, if they need it."

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Kristofer Karol at (517) 552-2835 or at [kkarol@gannett.com](mailto:kkarol@gannett.com).




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## Sex Offenders Found At Local Halfway House

### *Bay City Halfway House Effectiveness Questioned*

POSTED: 3:43 pm EST November 10, 2008

UPDATED: 8:17 am EST November 11, 2008



**BAY CITY, Mich. --** The continuing legal problems of convicted killer Nathaniel Abraham brings about the question, just how effective are Michigan Juvenile Halfway houses?

Abraham was one of the youngest convicted murderers in Michigan history after he was found guilty of shooting an 18-year-old man outside of a liquor store in 1997.

Abraham was 11-years-old at the time. Each year, families and the state put their children in these homes, hoping the system can turn them around.

But it turns out the system may be broken. TV5 discovered that registered sex offenders live in these houses, including four at a home in Bay City.

TV5 checked to see if the state is keeping up their end of the bargain or if neighborhoods are being put at risk.

Abraham, now 22, went back behind bars for 93 days after driving with a suspended license and some question if the halfway house he spent his time in prepared him for his return to society.

He also faces charges of drug distribution following an arrest in Pontiac last May.

Abraham served much of his murder conviction at the Parmenter House in Bay City.

It was there that Abraham was provided a job and the opportunity to sign up for classes at a community college.

After combing through documents from the state Department of Human Services, the I-TEAM discovered three halfway houses in Michigan and that last year, more than \$2.5 million tax dollars was spent at the houses.

The state does not keep recidivism rates of individuals who were sentences to the juvenile halfway houses.

It has no idea of its offenders have once again broken the law and are back in the legal and penal system.

"To me that's strange," said state Democratic Rep. Andy Coulouris. "To me, that's how you're going to measure success."

Rep. Coulouris was alarmed that the state does not keep such records. "It seems to me that we want to know how good a job we are doing with these juveniles," he said.

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● **Video:** [I-TEAM: Halfway Houses Exposed](#)

+ FAMILY	TV5 traveled to Lansing to ask the head of Juvenile Housing why the state does not track recidivism.
+ EDUCATION	
TECHNOLOGY	"Our data systems haven't begun to start talking to each other," said John Evans, with the Bureau of Juvenile Justice. "But we are making great strides and discussions are going on all the time."
PETS	
WNEM MARKETPLACE	The I-TEAM also discovered that sex offenders live in Michigan's halfway houses and four alone are housed at Parmenter in Bay City.
GET IT CLASSIFIEDS	
MARKETPLACE	Residents near the halfway house were less than thrilled to learn of their presents.
ABOUT US	"I don't like it," said Kevin Buzzard. "I've got a little daughter."
FLINT NEWS BUREAU	
CONTACT TV5	Another man said, "I've got grandkids and I don't want anything to happen to them."
TV5 JOB OPENINGS	"They should let us know what kind of people live in our neighborhood," said Gloria Garcia, another resident.
STAFF BIOGRAPHIES	"Especially sex offenders."
TV5 BLOGS	Representative Coulouris told TV5 he plans on bringing up the issue and propose changes in the House Judiciary Committee in January.
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## Denise Brown to speak in Mid-Michigan

ADVERTISEMENT

Monday, November 10, 2008 at 1:11 p.m.



Denise Brown, sister of the late Nicole Brown Simpson, will be the keynote speaker at the YWCA's annual Circle of Women Luncheon on Wednesday, November 12th, 2008 at the Holiday Inn Gateway Centre. The Circle of Women event showcases how YWCA programming impacts the lives of women and children in our community, particularly around the area of sexual assault and domestic violence. There is a minimum contribution of \$100 to attend the event.

After the tragic death of her sister 13 years ago, Denise Brown became an outspoken advocate for domestic violence awareness. She has worked to help pass a variety of legislative solutions on domestic violence. One of the most important projects she took on was to lobby on behalf of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Ms. Brown, upon request of Senator Arlen Specter, testified to the U. S. Senate Appropriations Committee for increased funding for VAWA. After her testimony, that part of the bill's funding increased from \$18 million to \$32 million. The local YWCA receives a significant amount of funding from VAWA in support of our Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault programming.

"The Violence Against Women Act has made it possible for the YWCA of Greater Flint to provide services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault that would otherwise not be possible," said Candy Mattison, Director of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services at the YWCA of Greater Flint. "Everyday I see the impact that VAWA has on this community. Without these funds, thousands of women and children in Genesee County touched by violent crimes would go without support or voice."

The Circle of Women fundraising event brings hundreds of women from Genesee County and surrounding areas together to celebrate the importance of the mission of the YWCA. It also raises needed funds to support the YW's Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services and other programs. Today, in addition to providing child care and health and fitness programming, the YWCA operates the only SafeHouse in Genesee County for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The YW provides temporary emergency shelter, counseling, support groups, legal advocacy services, and emergency response services at local hospitals to more than 400 domestic violence and sexual assault survivors annually to assist them as they work to rebuild their lives.

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The Community Foundation of Greater Flint and The Stella and Frederick Loeb Charitable Trust administered by Citizens Bank Wealth Management have generously provided funding to the YWCA of Greater Flint in support of the Circle of Women.

For more information visit [www.ywcaflint.org](http://www.ywcaflint.org)

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#### CONSUMER





## "Make a Difference Day" serves Owosso's Hungry, More Than 1,000 Families Come for Food Assistance

by Laura Sauer  
November 11, 2008

It was a cold, rainy Saturday in Owosso, Mich., but more than 1,000 families were in line at 9 a.m. waiting for the arrival of the [Mid-Michigan Food Bank Mobile Food Pantry](#). Last August, Shiawassee County families were very disappointed to learn that the Mid-Michigan Food Bank did



not have enough donated food to fill the Mobile Pantry and had to cancel its scheduled stop. This year's Make a Difference Day, however, was able to [help hunger in Michigan](#) with the assistance of local Michigan businesses.

Most of the people in line are happy to get enough food to help their family get through the week...but in honor of Make a Difference Day, children were also be surprised with clowns, face-painters, free pumpkins and Halloween costumes. Music, apple cider, coffee and doughnuts kept everyone cheery while in line. Free transportation to and from the site was provided by local church congregations and the Transportation Solutions Division of the Shiawassee Area Transportation Authority. Memorial Healthcare of Owosso is underwriting the Mobile Food Pantry with their donation of 1,000 dollars. The Mid-Michigan Food Bank along with Shiawassee Harvest Ministries delivered a truckload of frozen chicken to be handed out in addition to the usual produce and canned goods.

For the first time this year, the Health Delivery Mobile Dental Bus provided teeth cleaning services and fluoride treatment for children. Sue Osika, Service Center Manager of the Shiawassee Service Center of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross has participated in 'Make a Difference Day' for the last six years. "The Red Cross is always trying to make a difference. We prepare, prevent and respond to all disasters. Today we are making a difference in so many lives," said Osika.

However, the number in need this year was even greater than anticipated. Each truck holds meals for about 400 families, which is the average number that the Mid-Michigan Food bank expects at these events. This year, more than 1,000 families came to the event, some even camping out the

night before for the food they need. "This shows a dilemma for all food banks in the coming months: the increase in need," said Alison Bono, community relations coordinator for the Mid-Michigan Food bank. "We repackaged some of the parcels of food to make sure everyone got something, but everyone did not get as much as we had planned."

"I wish we could come together like this everyday and feed the growing number of hungry families in Michigan. These are unusually tough times in our history -- but these are the times when Americans gain strength and take care of one another," said Dave Karr, director of the [Mid-Michigan Food Bank](#).

As a member of Feeding America, Mid-Michigan Food Bank provides the local infrastructure of warehouse space, trucks, safety standards, staff and volunteers required to provide high-quality food and personal care products to its member agencies and serve people in need. [www.mid.michiganfoodbank.org](http://www.mid.michiganfoodbank.org). The Mid-Michigan Food Bank is a division of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization led by volunteers and guided by its congressional charter and the fundamental principles of the International Red Cross movement, provides relief to victims of disaster and helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. [www.midmichiganredcross.org](http://www.midmichiganredcross.org).



## Homeless families increasing in county

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By FRANK KONKEL

Sentinel-Standard writer

Published: Monday, November 10, 2008 11:36 PM CST

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IONIA - Homelessness has always been a problem in Ionia County, but never to the extent it's at right now.

According to the Ionia/Montcalm EightCAP, Inc. offices, Michigan's all-time high unemployment rates coupled with a struggling housing market have put more families at risk than ever before.

In turn, more than 200 families in Ionia and Montcalm counties have already applied for homeless "heart" vouchers from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). Unfortunately, the vouchers - which cover bills like rent - are limited. Only 15 will be distributed to each county.

"What we're finding out is our families are coming in and they have no place to go," said Ionia/Montcalm EightCAP, Inc. community service coordinator Sue Eller. "It's a really sad, sad situation. Our community is hurting."

This year's problems are a continuation of last year's, with 51 percent of documented people facing homelessness being families. To help create awareness, the federal government has declared this week "Homelessness Awareness Week" in an effort to educate and inform the public on what's becoming an all too common problem.

The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness has launched a special Web site to support the activities of Homeless Awareness Week and make it easier for the public to find a local shelter or other organization that needs support during and beyond the Homeless Awareness Week. The Web site can be found at [www.mihomelessweek.org](http://www.mihomelessweek.org).

Entire families being kicked to the streets is bad enough, but what's worse is that Eller said when families are facing the potential of being homeless, they often feel out of options. Many families fill out paperwork and apply for vouchers and other forms of assistance from

EightCAP agencies, but before they “get to the next step,” they’ve already moved on to something else.

“What we’re seeing is a lot of families living with other families,” Eller said. “They come together and share housing because that’s what they have to do. They’re emotionally desperate, so once they’ve found some different, stable condition, they move on.”

Sometimes, these families are able to weather the difficult circumstances and get back on their feet. Other times, however, the problems that caused them to become homeless continue following them around.

No matter the case, there are options available for those in need - whether they are individuals or families - that can make a substantial difference. Eller said those facing homelessness can always contact their local EightCAP agency - Ionia’s can be reached at 616-527-5507 - as well as Michigan’s Department of Human Services Ionia County office at 616-527-5200.

According to Eller, while homelessness has always been around Ionia County, it has now become one of its largest problems, and there’s no way of knowing if homelessness will continue to be a growing problem.

“We hardly ever saw homeless people, we’ve never seen the amount of homelessness that’s come to our doors lately,” Eller said. “They’re saying their jobs aren’t coming back, their homes have been foreclosed. It’s a mess.”



## 'One-stop' services offered to homeless

**Posted by Susan Harrison Wolffis | The Muskegon Chronicle November 11, 2008 06:16AM**

A mobile Secretary of State's truck. Legal services. Substance abuse counseling. Mental health testing.

All these — and dozens of other services and resources — are part of the second annual Project Homeless Connect 1-5 p.m. Wednesday at Michigan Works-Orchard View Workforce Development Center, 2389 E. Laketon.

Think of it as a "one-stop" reference point for Muskegon County residents who are homeless or at risk. Imagine a place where the homeless can make one stop to receive everything from legal advice to a warm winter coat to assistance filling out Medicaid applications.

That's Project Homeless Connect, said Javi Hernandez, an outreach specialist at Webster House who is chairing the event.

"The idea is to have everything in one spot ... under one roof," he said.

In addition, a Second Harvest Gleaners mobile food pantry will arrive at the center at 1 p.m. Starting at 2:30 p.m., the first 250 to attend will receive free flu shots.

Project Homeless Connect is a project of the Muskegon County Continuum of Care, a coalition of more than 40 agencies dedicated to ending homelessness in the area.

More than 25 agencies and organizations, ranging from Every Woman's Place to West Michigan Therapy Inc., will have information and representatives on hand.

Roughly 300 people attended Muskegon County's first Project Homeless Connect in 2007, which was the first year it was held locally, Hernandez said.

"We expect even more this year, since the economy is in worse condition," he said.

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## Summit gears up to reduce poverty in Michigan

Posted by [diivey](#) October 31, 2008 12:15PM

LANSING-- Kicking off a statewide initiative to reduce poverty and maximize economic opportunities, the Department of Human Services will host the Voices for Action Poverty Summit in Detroit on Nov. 13.

The event will focus on success stories of working families who are recovering or have recovered from economic challenges.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm and Martin Luther King III will be keynote speakers. The event will include 16 workshops where legislators, students, advocates and citizens will learn ways to fight poverty.

An important goal of the summit, Human Services Director Ismael Ahmed said, is to reduce overall poverty by 50 percent and child poverty by 60 percent in the next 10 years.

More than two million people - including one in five children in Michigan - are in or near poverty, Ahmed said.

"Michigan's efforts to reduce poverty and maximize economic opportunity will help achieve the national goal of reducing poverty by 50 percent in the next decade," Ahmed said. "We know that a state effort combined with regional solutions and committed, caring people can make all the difference."

Other goals for the summit include creating 400,000 jobs, retraining 100,000 displaced workers and ensuring access to health care for 1.1 million uninsured residents.

The summit reflects Granholm's State of the State priorities of a job for every worker, education for every child, training for every citizen and health care for every family, Ahmed said.

"We're lucky our governor has given us clear program objectives," he said.

Representatives from advocacy groups, human services departments and other organizations will attend region-specific breakout sessions, said Jeff Brown, executive director of the Kalamazoo County Poverty Reduction Initiative.

Brown's group will lead a session on job training opportunities, where participants will describe their success with the free Road Construction Apprenticeship Readiness Program that certifies low-income individuals to enter the road construction industry.

"We're hoping our success stories will help generate new ideas for job training programs," Brown said.

The Poverty Reduction Initiative and Western Michigan University's Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations, will lead the Southwest Michigan region in post-summit activities.

"We can have meeting after meeting, but in the end we're just sitting around and talking unless we put our ideas into practice," Brown said. "We're going to invest in those ideas and find real solutions to poverty."

One advisory board member said he wants to make sure that people actually experiencing poverty have a chance to speak out.

"My primary role was to do everything I could to make sure that the voice of our clients, the voices of poverty, is not silenced during the summit," said Anthony Floyd, an employment and life coach for the Genesee County Community Action Resource Department.

"Oftentimes what happens in summits and seminars is that they're so information-conscious and there's not enough listening done to people actually in poverty. They're so tied up in their own goals, they lose sight that of the fact that we're here to try and improve conditions for poverty-stricken people and to assist them in getting out of poverty."

Amed said many families exist on the brink of poverty. One medical problem or layoff notice can push them over the

edge, he noted.

"Too many families are just one paycheck away from sliding into poverty," Ahmed said. "This poverty reduction summit will bring together leaders from across our state to identify strategies to enhance efforts already underway."

Families continue to struggle. Child poverty rose from 17.8 percent in 2006 to 19 percent in 2007, according to the Michigan League for Human Services.

"We know that many families are struggling harder and harder just to get by, and more vulnerable people are turning to public services for help," league President Sharon Parks said.

"This reinforces the critical need to strengthen our strained safety net, and policymakers must pay attention to these startling figures," she said.

The summit will be held in cooperation with the Governor's Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity and the Michigan Community Action Agency Association (Voices for Action Network).

Categories: [Breaking News](#)

## Comments

Footer



November 12, 2008

## Summit to look for ways out of poverty

Statewide conference at Cobo on Thursday

*BY MARGARITA BAUZA*  
*FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER*

Thousands of business and community leaders are to gather for the first statewide Poverty Summit at Cobo Center on Thursday to find ways to reduce poverty and stimulate economic opportunities in the region.

Organizers expected 2,500 registrants.

"There are people across the state who work every day for an employer someplace who don't make enough to live," said Ismael Ahmed, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services. "Part of the way we defeat poverty is to look at the question of growing the economy and retraining."

The summit is an initiative of the department, which kicked off statewide hearings a year ago to prioritize efforts to fight poverty.

That evolved into Thursday's summit, which is to feature business and community leaders from around the state holding talks and brainstorming sessions.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm, Martin Luther King III and business leaders are expected. Speakers are to include Michigan residents talking about how they fought their way out of poverty.

State officials say 2 million people in the state live at or below the national poverty level, including 500,000 children. More than 1.3 million Michigan people receive food assistance.

With the area bleeding 400,000 jobs in recent years and an additional 100,000 more job losses expected in the near future, the state needs to focus on job training and programs that will get workers back on their feet, Ahmed said.

"We need to focus on what happens to people," he said.

The summit will highlight programs like the Michigan Individual Development Account Program, which has helped more than 1,700 households save for college, start or expand small businesses, and buy homes, said program coordinator Susan Lindson.

It serves people who live below the poverty level, doubling or tripling their savings up to \$2,000. Since 2001, participants have saved \$1.2 million. Participants also get financial counseling, including how to budget and save.

"It offers very intensive training and financial management," Lindson said. Participants also get business development training and coaching.

For those enrolled in the program to start a business, participants need to make a commitment to save money. When they have completed their business development plans, they can withdraw their money and use it to help establish their business, Lindson added. "Just giving people the money doesn't fix things."

Jennifer Brown, 40, of Belleville, started a day care business through the program after she was laid off from her job as a purchasing agent in 2001.



A single mom with no savings, she wanted to launch a day care but needed seed money and education. She enrolled in the program, began saving money and received training on how to open and run a business.

At the end of the year, she had saved \$1,000 and received a \$2,000 match from the state.

She used it to buy a fence and playground equipment.

Since 2001, her business has grown from an idea to a 12-child operation that admits newborns to 12-year-olds. She also has a latchkey program. Her house is set up like a preschool, with computers, playground equipment and a learning atmosphere.

She also used state programs to finish a degree in child development.

"It made me save money," she said. "It just worked out so well. One door opened up to another."

Contact **MARGARITA BAUZA** at 313-222-6823 or [mbauza@freepress.com](mailto:mbauza@freepress.com).

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November 11, 2008

Nation

**Iraqi Refugees Find Michigan Is No Land Of Plenty**

by Jamie Tarabay

**Listen Now** [5 min 45 sec] [add to playlist](#)

Morning Edition, November 11, 2008 · Michigan has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, so the last thing the state needs is more people coming in without jobs — and that includes refugees from Iraq. The economy is so bleak that the State Department no longer wants to allow Iraqis to settle in Michigan unless they have immediate relatives already living there.

At the Catholic Archdiocese refugee center in Detroit, Raed Jabro is talking with caseworker Rhonda Perkins about a possible job lead. Jabro, a 49-year-old engineer with neat hair and trim spectacles, has been in Detroit since August. He is hoping for something in his field, but the market doesn't look good.

"It's not easy to find a job now," he says.

Jabro is one of thousands of Iraqi refugees trickling into the United States — a fraction of the millions who have lost their homes in Iraq because of the war. His brother and sister already live in Detroit, and they sponsored Jabro and his family to move there.

The search for employment may not be easy for Jabro, but he has a head start compared with other Iraqis: He has qualifications, workable English and access to a car, which is critical to getting anywhere in this city stacked with highways but lacking in public transportation.

Two years ago, only 202 Iraqi refugees were allowed into the country. This year, that number is almost 14,000 — and most refugees have gravitated to Detroit, home to America's largest Arab population as well as a sizable Iraqi Christian or Chaldean community. But now officials say they're swamped.

John Bimatta, the head of refugee services for the Archdiocese of Detroit, says it's not easy to handle all the newcomers.

"They need the help of the entire community," Bimatta says. "When everything will be easy for us, we can say bring more."

**Resettling Refugees**

Bimatta's office is just one national agency that the State Department pays to help resettle refugees. He expects to resettle about 1,000 people this year, but only those who have immediate relatives already living here.

This new policy is creating another problem: secondary migration. Refugees are settled in another part of the country, and they come to Detroit anyway.

In Farmington Hills, northwest of Detroit, Rawa Bahou and her three children live crammed into a two-bedroom apartment with her brother-in-law, his wife and their two children. Bahou's children are all under 9 years old. They climb onto chairs and poke at their bowls of beans and rice, and it gets a bit crowded at dinnertime.

Bahou is a widow. She says she left Iraq after her husband was killed by an American military patrol. After three years of waiting in Syria, she finally was granted asylum status. Her nearest relatives live in Detroit, but the United Nations — which works with different countries' resettlement agencies to place refugees — sent her to Atlanta.

"We stayed in an apartment they rented for us," Bahou says. "I didn't go out. I closed the door, rang my in-laws to come get me."

Her brother-in-law rented a van, drove to Atlanta and brought them to Detroit. But all the things that came with her resettlement — the apartment, the cash assistance, the food stamps — stayed behind. The bureaucracy has yet to catch up with her move.

### **A Competitive Market**

Bahou's sister-in-law complains that no one has been able to give them answers, and her brother-in-law, his hands black with grease from his job as a mechanic, says he has to carry the burden of providing for everyone.

But at least one of the people they have gone to for help insists everything is OK. Joe Kassab, the head of Detroit's Chaldean federation, says the Chaldean community can take care of its own. He disagrees with the decision to restrict the numbers of Iraqi refugees.

"Those who aren't working, their families are supporting them. They are not a burden on the government or the state," Kassab says. "They are a clannish people. They live among each other, and if I lose money, I have my cousin — my uncle going to help me."

Many Iraqi Chaldean refugees who want to work are employed in Chaldean-owned hotels or supermarkets, Kassab says. Those are rare jobs in a state where unemployment is 8.7 percent.

Kassab sympathizes with the out-of-work Detroiters, who he says is more entitled to such jobs than a refugee. "I have no quarrel with that, but it's a competitive market," he says. "This is something that's up to the employer who they want to hire."

And that's what worries officials. The immediate resettlement — finding a house, giving three months' worth of cash assistance — is the easy part. The hard part comes afterward, when the money has run out, the economy is still bad and affordable housing is hard to come by. These refugees will have to deal with that in the long run.

*Sarah Hulett contributed to this report.*

### **Related NPR Stories**

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Aug. 1, 2008

[New Report Says Aid For Iraqi Refugees Lacking](#)

Feb. 28, 2008

[Iraqi Refugees Struggle To Build A Life In The U.S.](#)

## **Michigan Department of Human Services News Release**

**Contacts: Jan Berry 517-373-7394**

**Regina Funkhouser, Michigan Heart Gallery coordinator, 800-589-6273**

**Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange**

## **Michigan Heart Gallery 2008 Exhibit in Lansing Exhibit helps find adoptive families for foster children**

**Nov. 10, 2008**

**What:** The 2008 Michigan Heart Gallery, a touring photo exhibit featuring stirring portraits of 60 Michigan foster children who are waiting to be adopted, is on display in the main rotunda of the Michigan Hall of Justice in Lansing from Nov. 10 - 25. The photographs in the Heart Gallery were taken by more than 40 professional photographers who donated their time, talent and resources to take the pictures that help capture the spirit of the children in the foster care system.

The Michigan Heart Gallery is a collaborative effort between the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, the Adoptive Family Support Network and the Michigan Department of Human Services. There are more than 4,000 children without families in Michigan today. Recruitment activities such as the Heart Gallery remind people that there are many children in Michigan who are waiting to be adopted into a loving and caring home.

**When:** Nov. 10 - 25

**Where:** Michigan Hall of Justice, Main Rotunda, 925 West Ottawa, Lansing, Michigan 48915.

**Hours:** 8 - 5 p.m.

### **Ten things you should know:**

1. At any given time there are about 4,000 children in Michigan's foster care system who are available and waiting to be adopted.
2. Last year, almost 2,600 children were adopted through Michigan's foster care system.
3. Most families who adopt are also licensed foster parents or relatives. In fact, last year 93 percent of children adopted from the foster care system in Michigan were adopted by a foster parent or relative.
4. All adoptive families must go through a family assessment process that includes an education component, background checks, and an exploration of the family's interest in adopting.
5. Because the needs of each child are different, many different types of families are needed. You don't have to be married to adopt, and you don't need to be wealthy or own your own home.
6. Many of the children waiting for adoption are school-age or older, may need to be adopted along with siblings, or may have special placement needs.
7. About 500 Michigan children between the ages of 18 and 21 transition or "age out" of the foster care system annually. Studies of youths who have left foster care without being adopted have shown they are more likely than those in the general population to not finish high school, be unemployed, and be dependent on public assistance. Many find themselves in prison, homeless, or becoming parents at an early age.

8. The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is an information and referral program that can help answer some of your questions about adoption. Contact us at 800-589-6273 or visit online at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org)
9. The Heart Gallery is a project of the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange. It is our hope the Michigan Heart Gallery will inspire prospective parents to adopt an older child so these children can become part of a loving family and have a chance for a brighter, happier future.
10. Consider fostering, adopting or mentoring a waiting child!

**Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2008**

**Michigan Department of Human Services Media Advisory**

**Contact:** Edward Woods III, director of communications, 517-373-7394 or 517-927-1884; or Gisgie Dávila Gendreau, marketing and public relations director, 517-930-6367 or [gendreaug@michigan.gov](mailto:gendreaug@michigan.gov)

**Poverty Summit to be held Nov. 13 in Detroit**

**WHAT:**

2008 Voices for Action Poverty Summit

More than 4,000 people from across Michigan will attend the event, which will feature Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm and Martin Luther King III.

Because poverty continues to impact hard-working Michigan families, the event kicks off a statewide initiative to reduce poverty and to maximize economic opportunities for all.

Policymakers, residents and service providers from across the state will look for ways to ensure that as Michigan's economy recovers, no citizen is left behind.

**WHERE:**

Cobo Center  
One Washington Blvd.  
Detroit, MI 48226

**WHEN:**

8:15 a.m.-6 p.m.  
Thursday, Nov. 13

**NOTE:** We expect to hold a media availability at 8:20 a.m. with Martin Luther King III and DHS Director Ismael Ahmed.

A 4:15 p.m. media roundtable will feature representatives from the state's eight regions to talk about their area's priorities and next steps.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

A media room will be available with wireless Internet access, a live feed from the main hall and media availability opportunities with keynote speakers and DHS Director Ismael Ahmed.

Media not able to attend can listen in on the media availability by calling 866-628-8011 (U.S.) or 630-693-2137 (international). The passcode is 8992358#.

Video, high-resolution photos, stories and additional resources will be available and updated throughout the day at [www.michigan.gov/poverty](http://www.michigan.gov/poverty)

You can also watch videos or link to our page at [www.youtube.com/DHSPovertySummit](http://www.youtube.com/DHSPovertySummit)

For more information, please visit [www.michigan.gov/poverty](http://www.michigan.gov/poverty)